

OPERATION HUSKY: SEEKING AN OPERATIONAL APPROACH TO DECISIVE VICTORY

A Monograph

by

MAJ Geoffrey M. McKenzie

United States Army



School of Advanced Military Studies
United States Army Command and General Staff College
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

AY 2014-01

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing this collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.					
1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 05-05-2014		2. REPORT TYPE SAMS Monograph		3. DATES COVERED (From - To) June 2013 - May 2014	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE OPERATION HUSKY: SEEKING AN OPERATIONAL APPROACH TO DECISIVE VICTORY				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S) MAJ Geoffrey M. McKenzie				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army Command and General Staff College ATTN: ATZL-SWD-GD 100 Stimson Ave. Ft. Leavenworth, KS 66027-2301				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT Over the course of thirty-eight days, the Allies successfully took possession of Sicily and claimed a tactical victory. However, the Axis forces won a moral victory by opposing a numerically superior foe while preserving a significant portion of their fighting force. Military historians lament the Axis evacuation and the Allied failure to destroy the German and Italian armies in Sicily. The obvious question is why were the Allies unable to achieve a decisive victory. To determine why the German and Italian forces escaped Sicily it was necessary to investigate both the planning for Husky and the subsequent campaign. First, to reveal the decisions that led to the invasion of Sicily and shaped the operational design the research examined the documents emanating from the inter-allied strategic conferences. Second, it was necessary to review the historical doctrine most likely available to the planners for Operation Husky. Finally, it was necessary to compare current joint doctrine with the historical doctrine to identify relevant operational factors that contributed to the Allied inability to achieve decisive victory during the operation. Current doctrine, being more mature, reveals doctrinal planning elements that 1943 planners did not identify and provides insights into historical data and accounts of the campaign.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS Sicily, Operation Husky, Operational Art, Unity of Command, Anticipation, Center of Gravity					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UU	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 39	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT Unclassified	b. ABSTRACT Unclassified	c. THIS PAGE Unclassified			19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (include area code)

MONOGRAPH APPROVAL

Name of Candidate: MAJ Geoffrey M. McKenzie

Monograph Title: Operation Husky: Seeking an Operational Approach to Decisive Victory

Approved by:

_____, Monograph Director
William J. Gregor, Ph.D.

_____, Seminar Leader
Geoffrey C. De Tingo, COL, LG

_____, Director, School of Advanced Military Studies
Henry A. Arnold III, COL, IN

Accepted this 22nd day of May 2014 by:

_____, Director, Graduate Degree Programs
Robert F. Baumann, Ph.D.

The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author, and do not necessarily represent the views of the US Army Command and General Staff College or any other government agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

ABSTRACT

OPERATION HUSKY: SEEKING AN OPERATIONAL APPROACH TO DECISIVE VICTORY, by MAJ Geoffrey M. McKenzie, US Army, 37 pages.

Over the course of thirty-eight days, the Allies successfully took possession of Sicily and claimed a tactical victory. However, the Axis forces won a moral victory by opposing a numerically superior foe while preserving a significant portion of their fighting force. Military historians lament the Axis evacuation and the Allied failure to destroy the German and Italian armies in Sicily. The obvious question is why were the Allies unable to achieve a decisive victory.

To determine why the German and Italian forces escaped Sicily it was necessary to investigate both the planning for Husky and the subsequent campaign. First, to reveal the decisions that led to the invasion of Sicily and shaped the operational design the research examined the documents emanating from the inter-allied strategic conferences. The historical documents contain the strategic objectives and operational design prescribed by the Allied strategic leaders for the operation. Second, it was necessary to review the historical doctrine most likely available to the planners for Operation Husky. Reviewing historical doctrine reveals the military instructions that guided how planners translated the guidance and directives from strategic leaders into a plan of action. Finally, it was necessary to compare current joint doctrine with the historical doctrine to identify relevant operational factors that contributed to the Allied inability to achieve decisive victory during the operation. Current doctrine, being more mature, reveals doctrinal planning elements that 1943 planners did not identify and provides insights into historical data and accounts of the campaign. Additionally, the comparison of historical and current doctrine reveals key elements of current doctrine that were present in the historical doctrine, albeit expressed differently, but that both contemporary leaders and planners did not properly understand or apply.

The research found that the strategic guidance was wanting. The Allies failed to destroy Axis forces because the strategic guidance was vague and did not provide a clear vision of the end state of the campaign. Operational level commanders did not attempt to correct the shortfalls in strategic guidance either. The doctrine of the period was adequate although it did not directly address formulation of an operational approach. However, the planners chose the center of gravity incorrectly. Thus, the actions taken by the Allies once ashore were not able to either fix the enemy forces or isolate those forces from their route of withdrawal. The Allies were able to seize Sicily but the Axis forces were able to escape.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This monograph is a result of the efforts of many professionals throughout the School of Advanced Military Studies, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. During the past academic year, countless instructors and mentors have taught me to think critically, challenge assumptions, and seek answers to assist my understanding and visualization of the topic. I would like to thank COL Geoffrey C. De Tingo who provided the motivation and encouragement I needed to complete this task. I would also like to thank Dr. Gregory S. Hospodor for piquing my interest in the subject and for offering encouragement early on in the process. Lastly, I would like to thank my wife, Anne, for her support, patience and understanding throughout the year.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACRONYMS	vi
ILLUSTRATIONS	vii
INTRODUCTION	1
THE DECISION TO INVADE SICILY AND THE OUTLINE PLAN	3
Objective and Military End State	8
TRANSLATION OF THE JPS OPERATIONAL APPROACH	11
The Role of the Commander in Planning	16
AFHQ AND JOINT COORDINATION	17
Unity of Command	20
ALEXANDER AND HIS OPERATIONAL APPROACH	22
Anticipation	24
MESSINA AS THE CENTER OF GRAVITY	28
Center of Gravity	29
CONCLUSION	34
BIBLIOGRAPHY	38

ACRONYMS

AFHQ	Allied Force Headquarters
COG	Center of Gravity
CCS	Combined Chiefs of Staff
D-Day	Unnamed day on which operations commence or are scheduled to commence
FM	Field Manual
HQ	Headquarters
JPS	Joint Planning Staff
JP	Joint Publication
MGB	Medium Gun Boat
MTB	Medium Torpedo Boat

ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1. Operation Husky Change of Plan, CCS Plan January 1943 and Final Plan May 1943 ..	12
Figure 2. Operation Husky Final Plan for Assault Landings, 10 July 1943	14

INTRODUCTION

Operation Husky, the Allied invasion of Sicily, was the first large scale amphibious assault made by the Allies against a hostile beachhead.¹ Over the course of thirty-eight days, the Allies successfully took possession of the island and claimed a tactical victory. However, the Axis forces won a moral victory by opposing a numerically superior foe while preserving a significant portion of their fighting force. By the end of the Sicily campaign, the Germans evacuated over 50,000 German soldiers, approximately 10,000 vehicles, fifty-one tanks, over 160 guns, and nearly 20,000 tons of ammunition, fuel, and equipment. The Italians evacuated over 60,000 soldiers and sailors, 227 vehicles, forty-one guns, and even twelve mules.² The Allies squandered one opportunity after another to end the invasion of Sicily with a decisive victory. One historian, Hanson Baldwin, described the operation as an “Allied physical victory, a German moral victory.”³ American military historian, Carlo D’Este described the narrative of Operation Husky as two complementary parts. D’Este described the first part as “how the battle for Sicily was conceived, planned, and carried out by the Allies.”⁴ He described the second part as “how the Germans and their reluctant Italian ally succeeded in turning what ought to have been a great triumph into a bitter victory.”⁵ Military historians are clearly disappointed by the Allied failure to destroy the German and Italian armies in Sicily. The obvious question is why were the Allies unable to achieve a decisive victory.

¹Albert N. Garland and Howard M. Smyth, *United States Army in World War II, The Mediterranean Theater of Operations: Sicily and the Surrender of Italy* (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, US Army, 1965), 62.

²Carlo D’Este, *Bitter Victory: The Battle for Sicily, 1943*, American ed. (New York: EP. Dutton, 1988), 514-15.

³Hanson Baldwin, *Battles Lost and Won: Great Campaigns of World War II* (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1966), 225.

⁴D’Este, *Bitter Victory*, 21.

⁵Ibid.

To determine why the German and Italian forces escaped Sicily it was necessary to investigate both the planning for Husky and the subsequent campaign. First, to reveal the decisions that led to the invasion of Sicily and shaped the operational design the research examined the documents emanating from the inter-allied strategic conferences. The historical documents contain the strategic objectives and operational design prescribed by the Allied strategic leaders for the operation. Second, it was necessary to review the historical doctrine most likely available to the planners for Operation Husky. Reviewing historical doctrine reveals the military instructions that guided how planners translated the guidance and directives from strategic leaders into a plan of action. Finally, it was necessary to compare current joint doctrine with the historical doctrine to identify relevant operational factors that contributed to the Allied inability to achieve decisive victory during the operation. Current doctrine, being more mature, reveals doctrinal planning elements that were not identified in 1943 and provides insights into historical data and accounts of the campaign. Additionally, the comparison of historic and current doctrine reveals key elements of current doctrine that were present in the historical doctrine, albeit expressed differently, but that were not properly understood or applied.

The research design can be summarized as follows. Did the strategic leader provide the Husky planners adequate guidance to formulate a sound campaign plan? Was the campaign planning doctrine of the period adequate to guide planning: Lastly, once operations began, did the commanders and staffs apply doctrine correctly when they responded to battlefield conditions and enemy actions? The research found that the strategic guidance was wanting. The Allies failed to destroy Axis forces because the strategic guidance was vague and did not provide a clear vision of the end state of the campaign. Operational level commanders did not attempt to correct the shortfalls in strategic guidance either. The doctrine of the period was adequate although it did not directly address formulation of an operational approach. However, the planners chose the center of gravity incorrectly. Thus, the actions taken by the Allies once ashore were not able to either fix

the enemy forces or isolate those forces from their route of withdrawal. The Allies were able to seize Sicily but the Axis forces were able to escape.

THE DECISION TO INVADE SICILY AND THE OUTLINE PLAN

The British desire to occupy Sicily surfaced as early as December 1940. Five months after Italy entered the war, British staff officers developed a plan, codenamed Operation Influx, to occupy the island. The British sought to deny the island to the Germans, but Germany soon occupied Sicily and North Africa, thus, making the plan infeasible.⁶ The British planned another attack on Sicily in October 1941, codenamed Whipcord. The purpose of Operation Whipcord was to “relieve the siege on Malta, open the Mediterranean to British shipping, and cut off Axis supplies to Libya.”⁷ The British abandoned Operation Whipcord at the end of October due to insufficient shipping. The British revived their proposal to invade Sicily toward the end of September 1942. British planners and strategic leaders debated whether to make Sicily, Sardinia, Corsica, or Crete the next target after success in North Africa. In early January 1943, the British agreed to invade Sicily. Now, it was up to the British strategic leaders to convince the Americans to accept the operation. During the second inter-allied strategic planning conference at Casablanca, codenamed Symbol, the US Joint Chiefs of Staff and their British counterparts, collectively referred to as the Combined Chiefs of Staff (CCS), formulated the allied strategy for 1943. After debating the overall strategic direction, the Allied leaders developed their first strategic policy of the war. The strategic policy contained four elements. First, the Allies assigned top priority to combatting the German U-boat threat in the Atlantic Ocean. Second, the Allies agreed to concentrate on the defeat of Germany first, then Japan. Third, the strategic policy

⁶Alan F. Wilt, *War From the Top: German and British Military Decision Making during World War II* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 198.

⁷Ibid.

identified the capture of Sicily as the next major Allied operation upon completion of the North Africa campaign. Fourth, the Allies would continue to build-up forces for a cross-channel invasion once they had sufficiently weakened German strength. The Allied seizure of Sicily was not the primary focus of the Casablanca Conference. The decision to invade Sicily was a compromise. US strategic leaders would have preferred a cross-channel invasion in 1943, however they accepted an invasion of Sicily because it would put to use the large number of troops available in North Africa, secure shipping lanes in the Mediterranean, possibly eliminate Italy from the war, and weaken Germany by forcing it to assume responsibility for Italian commitments.⁸ However, the Allies failed to answer fundamental questions about the overall Mediterranean strategy. Therefore, the satisficing nature of the decision to invade Sicily and the indecision as to future operations after Husky contributed to dearth of guidance and confusion about the goal of the campaign.

The Combined Chiefs of Staff issued a hastily developed outline plan on 23 January 1943 based only on objectives for the initial invasion of Sicily without a clear operational approach to complete the reduction of the island and without a clear end state for Allied military forces. The British contingent arrived at the conference with a staff study concerning the requirements for an invasion of Sicily. The British staff study, a detailed formal report focusing on logistic and administrative requirements, sought as its primary objective the seizure of key airfields and ports to sustain ground forces.⁹ During the conference, British leaders directed their planning staff to turn the staff study into a plan. As Brigadier Sir Bernard Fergusson recounts in *The Watery Maze*, “With towels round their heads [the staff] worked out perfectly accurate figures of tonnages and loading tables and the like. There was nothing wrong with their homework, and the result looked

⁸Garland and Smyth, *Sicily and the Surrender of Italy*, 10.

⁹D’Este, *Bitter Victory*, 78.

convincing; but it was not founded upon a rock.”¹⁰ The missing element, the rock described by Fergusson, was an operational approach and end state to describe the goal of the campaign. The operational approach is a planning method. Commanders must describe the broad actions their command must take to achieve the desired military end state.¹¹ That description is today called the commander’s operational approach. Through his operational approach, the commander provides a vision of the operation which supports the detailed planning that follows. The commander’s understanding of the current conditions of the environment, the mission, and the desired future conditions of the environment (end state) facilitates the development of the operational approach. Without a clear end state, the commander has difficulty visualizing and describing courses of actions that achieve the objective of the campaign. Without a clear operational approach, planners cannot focus beyond the initial invasion objectives. Consequently, the Allies failed to adopt a direct coordinated approach to trap the Axis defenders on the island. The Allied preoccupation with resources, sustainment, and the initial phases of amphibious operations prevented the staffs from rigorously planning responses to enemy courses of action and from creating friendly courses of actions to trap the Axis defenders. From that point forward, planning continued predisposed to a direct frontal assault on the island which crippled the prospects for preventing the enemy evacuation from Sicily. Planners failed to realize the full extent of their capability to maneuver from the sea. They never planned for secondary amphibious operations to flank the defenders and shape the outcome of the invasion.

The Allies based Operation Husky on the three limited objectives described in CCS Memorandum 155/1. These objectives were to:

¹⁰Bernard Fergusson, *The Watery Maze: The Story of Combined Operations* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1961), 221.

¹¹Joint Publication 5-0, *Joint Operation Planning*, (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, 11 August 2011), III-5 – III-6.

- 1) Secure Allied lines of communication in the Mediterranean.
- 2) Divert as much German strength as possible from the Russian front.
- 3) Pressure Italy to drop out of the war.¹²

The specific military objective for the campaign was to capture and control the island as a base for future military operations. However, the Allies left the Casablanca Conference without defining the operations that would occur after Husky. The failure to plan for sequels to the invasion of Sicily directly affected the development of the operational approach. There were two basic operational approaches to capturing the island. The first approach consisted of encirclement and isolation. This approach theoretically consisted of a primary amphibious assault in the Strait of Messina and Calabria, the “Toe of Italy,” combined with a secondary assault on the island to draw the enemy away from the Messina area.¹³ This approach offered the best chance of cutting off the enemy’s primary line of communication, the port of Messina. As Carlo D’Este states in *Bitter Victory*, “Amphibious landings along the Messina and Calabrian coasts along with secondary landings in southern Sicily would have immediately left Axis forces in a helpless position, with their lifeline – the Messina Strait – sealed off to reinforcement and to escape.”¹⁴ However, planners did not consider this option due to the Allied failure to identify sequels. Landing on Calabria, despite its limited purpose, constituted an invasion of the Italian mainland which exceeded the strategic guidelines set forth at Casablanca.¹⁵ The second approach, selected by the CCS, consisted of a direct frontal assault on only the island of Sicily. The confluence of suitable beaches, ports, and airfields on the northwest and southeast corners of Sicily led planners

¹²“Casablanca Conference, January 1943: Papers and Minutes of Meetings. World War II Operational Documents,” <http://cgsc.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/p4013coll8/id/3688/rec/4> (accessed November 25, 2013), 18.

¹³Omar N. Bradley, *A General's Life*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), 162.

¹⁴D’Este, *Bitter Victory*, 76.

¹⁵*Ibid.*

to propose landings in both areas.¹⁶ Planners emphasized the necessity for numerous beaches and ports in order to meet the logistical requirements of both the US 7th Army and the British 8th Army.

The CCS approved the Joint Planning Staff (JPS) outline plan calling for several dispersed invasion sites. The seizure of key airfields and ports were designated as the amphibious assault's the primary objectives. On D-Day, three British divisions would land on the southeast corner of the island and secure the ports of Syracuse and Augusta along with nearby airfields to enable a subsequent assault by one British division on Catania. Simultaneously, on D-Day, one US division would land on the southwest shore to secure airfields to enable a subsequent two US division assault on Palermo. The plan also tasked a follow on force of one British division and one US division landing at Catania and Palermo.¹⁷ Almost immediately, once the CCS approved the plan, planners displayed concern over the plan's deficiencies.¹⁸ However, a senior British officer on General Eisenhower's Allied Force Headquarters (AFHQ) staff reportedly admonished dissenting planners stating, "It was not theirs to reason why...the plan had been approved on Olympian level at Casablanca, and [was] therefore sacrosanct."¹⁹

The CCS issued CCS Memorandum 171/2/D to General Eisenhower on 23 January 1943. In this directive, the CCS established a tentative target date in July 1943 and designated the command structure for future Mediterranean Operations. The CCS appointed General Dwight D. Eisenhower as the Supreme Commander. The directive also designated General Sir Harold R. L. G. Alexander as the Deputy Supreme Commander and Commander of Allied Land Forces, Admiral Sir Andrew B. Cunningham as the Naval Forces Commander, and Air Chief Marshal Sir

¹⁶Andrew J. Birtle, *Sicily* (Washington, DC: US Center for Military History, 1993), <http://www.history.army.mil/brochures/72-16/72-16.htm> (accessed 11 January 2014), 6.

¹⁷Casablanca Conference, January 1943: Papers and Minutes of Meetings, 64.

¹⁸Fergusson, *The Watery Maze*, 221.

¹⁹*Ibid.*

Arthur Tedder as the Air Commander. The CCS also charged General Eisenhower with immediately establishing a special staff to plan and prepare the operation.²⁰ General Eisenhower established the planning staff, designated Force 141, within the AFHQ Operations and Training Section. Force 141 began detailed planning on 12 February 1943.

Objective and Military End State

Chapter 2 Planning a Campaign in the 1942 version of Field Manual (FM) 100-15 *Field Regulations for Larger Units* dedicates an entire section to the subject of the objective. That section begins by describing the object of war. Echoing Prussian military theorist, Carl von Clausewitz, this manual states the object of war “is to impose the will of one country upon that of another.”²¹ This manual continues by noting “the accomplishment of this object normally requires the decisive defeat or destruction of the hostile armed forces.”²² This discussion of the object of war refers to strategic objectives such as those defined by the CCS and discussed above. In discussing operational objectives, the manual moves from focusing upon destruction of an enemy’s armed forces to more tangible physical or terrain objectives. The failure to align the strategic and operational objectives, the former being oriented on enemy armed forces and the latter oriented on physical or terrain objectives, contributed to the Allied failure to cut off and destroy the Axis defenders. Strategically, the Allies sought, through the invasion, to attack the Axis alliance itself and to force Italy from the war. Operationally, the Allies focused on seizing the island, not destruction of the enemy force. Destroying German and Italian forces in Sicily

²⁰Casablanca Conference, January 1943: Papers and Minutes of Meetings, 125.

²¹War Department, Field Manual 100-15, *Field Regulations for Larger Units* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1942), 11.

²²*Ibid.*

would have led to the seizure of the island, but, it might have also influenced the Italians to leave the war.

FM 100-15 admits that a commander's major problem is selection of the objective. The manual observes "the assigned mission will require the selection of a physical objective or series of objectives, the occupation, destruction, or neutralization of which will bring about the decisive defeat or destruction of the enemy or will constitute a threat so great as to cause him to sue for peace."²³ The manual emphasizes that "maximum force must be concentrated against that particular objective or system of objectives most vital to the success of the campaign."²⁴ There are two main considerations in selecting operational objectives: (1) the position of enemy forces or the mass of these forces and their lines of communication, (2) the location of vital essentials of a nation's existence. FM 100-15 describes these essentials as:

- a. Vital industrial, communication, and commercial centers.
- b. Sources of raw materials.
- c. Lines of communication and supply within the nation.
- d. Seat of government control and administration.²⁵

The manual also states "the nation's capital is ordinarily the junction of a network of road and rail communication, the focus of wealth, and the nerve center of the people."²⁶ The threat to the capital or other vital elements of a nation's life would cause the enemy to fight to retain it. Therefore, an advance or seizure of such a vital asset may serve as a necessary intermediate means to the decisive defeat or destruction of hostile forces. Recognizing Messina as a vital

²³War Department, FM 100-15 *Field Regulations for Larger Units*, 12.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid.

element in the Axis defense of Sicily follows this logic and confirms its selection as the ultimate goal of the operation.

The selection of Messina as the ultimate operational objective for Operation Husky adheres to the doctrinal considerations listed above. Clearly, the line of communication defined by the Strait of Messina served as the lifeline for Axis forces. The Straits of Messina would serve as both a source of supply and reinforcement as well as a route over which to withdraw forces from the island. An envelopment of Messina offered the opportunity to disrupt communications either trapping the enemy or forcing his withdrawal. The failure to seize Messina and disrupt the enemy's communications might have prolonged the operation by allowing the Axis to reinforce the island.

A single statement in FM 100-15 encapsulates the point of departure from historical doctrine. The statement is “whatever the objective selected for the initial operations, the decisions and plans of the commander must be positive and clear-cut, and they must visualize the attainment of the ultimate objective.”²⁷ The 1942 manual required the commander to visualize the linkage between the initial objectives and the ultimate objective and to describe this vision to his subordinates so that they would understand how the phases of the operation fit together. Additionally, subordinates must understand and accept how their supported and supporting roles are coordinated towards attainment of the ultimate objective. Throughout the operation, the failure to describe the link between attainment of initial objectives and attainment of the ultimate objective was a source of concern among subordinate commanders.

The current Joint Publication (JP) 5.0 *Joint Operations Planning* defines an objective as “a clearly defined, decisive, and attainable goal toward which every military operation should be

²⁷War Department, FM 100-15 *Field Regulations for Larger Units*, 12.

directed.”²⁸ The doctrine emphasizes the importance of the military end state and termination criteria. Planners develop strategic and operational military objectives once they understand the military end state and establish termination criteria.²⁹ Planners require a clear and concise end state to better examine objectives that attain the desired end state. Attaining operational objectives fulfills the role of the operational level of war by tying the execution of tactical tasks to reaching the military end state. The emphasis on the military end state points to a primary fault in Operation Husky planning.

The decisions made at the Casablanca Conference leading to the invasion of Sicily left undefined future Allied action after-Husky. This is the genesis of the historians’ distaste for what D’Este calls a “Bitter Victory.” The strategic objectives outlined for the CCS clearly set the aims of the invasion. The plan did not call for the destruction of all Axis defenders on the island. Operation Husky was seen as an opportunity to employ excess forces after Torch in order to secure the Mediterranean sea lines of communication, divert pressure from the eastern front, and apply pressure to Italy. By driving the Axis off the island, the 15th Army Group was able to meet the strategic objectives. According to Alexander, who stated in his memoirs, “Once firmly ashore the two Allied armies set about reducing the island, an operation that went according to plan.”³⁰ Alexander’s statement indicates he understood Operation Husky’s goal as simply the seizure of the island.

TRANSLATION OF THE JPS OPERATIONAL APPROACH

Limiting the purpose of Husky to simply seizing the island seriously impeded the formulation of the campaign. Force 141 began detailed planning on 12 February and only slightly

²⁸JP 5-0 *Joint Operation Planning*, III-20.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Harold Rupert Leofric George Alexander, *The Alexander Memoirs, 1940-1945* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1962), 108.

modified the basic design developed by the British Joint Planning Staff (JPS) and accepted by the CCS at the Casablanca Conference.³¹ The proposed Force 141 plan (see figure 1) was for simultaneous landings by three British divisions along a 100 mile coastal front from Syracuse to Gela on the southeast corner of the island. One American division was to land sixty miles further west between Sciacca and Marinella. On D+2, another American landing would take place against Palermo on the northwest corner of the island. Finally, on D+3, another British landing would take place to seize Catania, a port on the east coast.³²

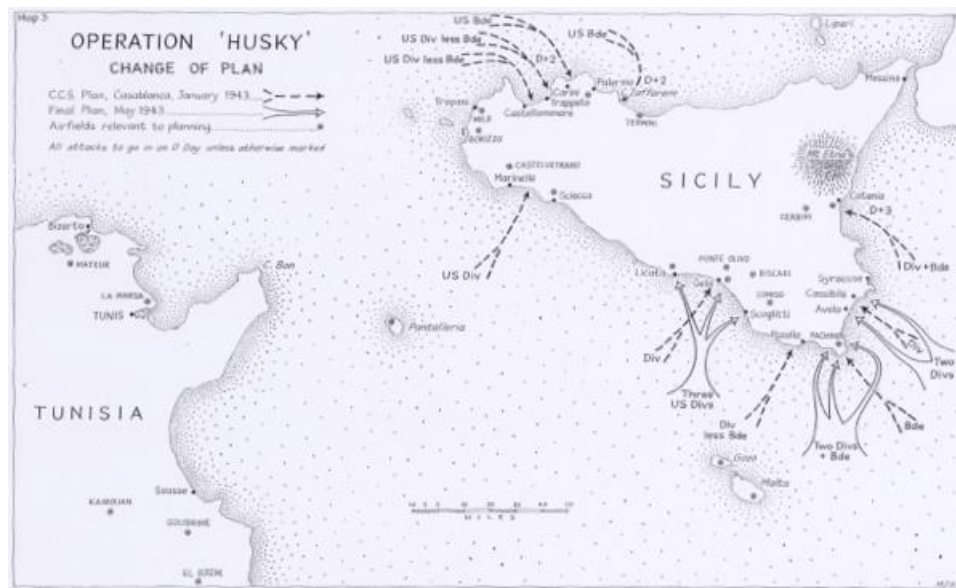


Figure 1. Operation Husky Change of Plan, CCS Plan January 1943 and Final Plan May 1943.

Source: Data from C.J.C. Molony et al., *The Mediterranean and Middle East*, vol. 5 (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1973), 17.

Though this plan may seem to imply an operation intended to disrupt and envelop enemy forces in Sicily, it was in reality focused on the ports of Palermo and Catania as well as scattered inland

³¹Garland and Smyth, *Sicily and the Surrender of Italy*, 58.

³²D'Este, *Bitter Victory*, 78.

airfields.³³ The plan left open the possibility that the Germans and Italians could reinforce or evacuate through the Straits of Messina. Force 141 continued to work on this version of the plan until 3 May 1943.

The Force 141 planners advanced the JPS outline plan because other matters distracted senior leaders and the planners were inexperienced. Generals Eisenhower and Alexander, as well as the service component commanders, Admiral Cunningham and Air Chief Tedder, and the commanders selected for the invasion force, Generals Montgomery and Patton were actively engaged in Tunisia. Thus, there was no hand guiding the development of the overall Operation Husky plan. An experienced staff may serve to mitigate the absence of senior leader involvement, however, the Force 141 planners had no experience planning a large amphibious operation. Consequently, the planners passed the JPS outline plan, essentially without modification, to the subordinate headquarters. Force 141 planners, in effect, simply assigned headquarters to the objectives identified for Operation Husky at Casablanca. The plan still did not define an operational approach beyond the initial invasion itself, nor did it define a clear military end state. This meant that once ashore, the two invading army commanders would be left to develop their own separate operations to secure the island without the mutual understanding and unity of effort generated by the land force commander through an overall operational approach.

Once Force 141 issued the plan to the army commanders, there was immediate dissension. General Montgomery, who was to command the British eastern task force, seized upon for the fact that the two armies could not support each other once ashore. Montgomery's experience in North Africa against the fierce German and Italian resistance led him to advocate the need to prepare for a strong enemy resistance upon invasion of Sicily.³⁴ The final plan (see

³³Garland and Smyth, *Sicily and the Surrender of Italy*, 58.

³⁴Bernard L. Montgomery, *Eighth Army: El Alamein to the River Sangro* (Germany: Printing and Stationary Services, British Army of the Rhine, 1946), 87.

figure 2) called for the American task force to shift its landings to the southeast corner of Sicily along the Gulf of Gela from Licata east to the Pachino peninsula. The British landings would focus on the coast from the Pachino Peninsula to the vicinity of Syracuse.³⁵ Montgomery, by focusing on the need to keep the two armies within supporting distance, limited the prospects for an encircling force and reinforced the tendency to push directly against German defenses up the east coast.

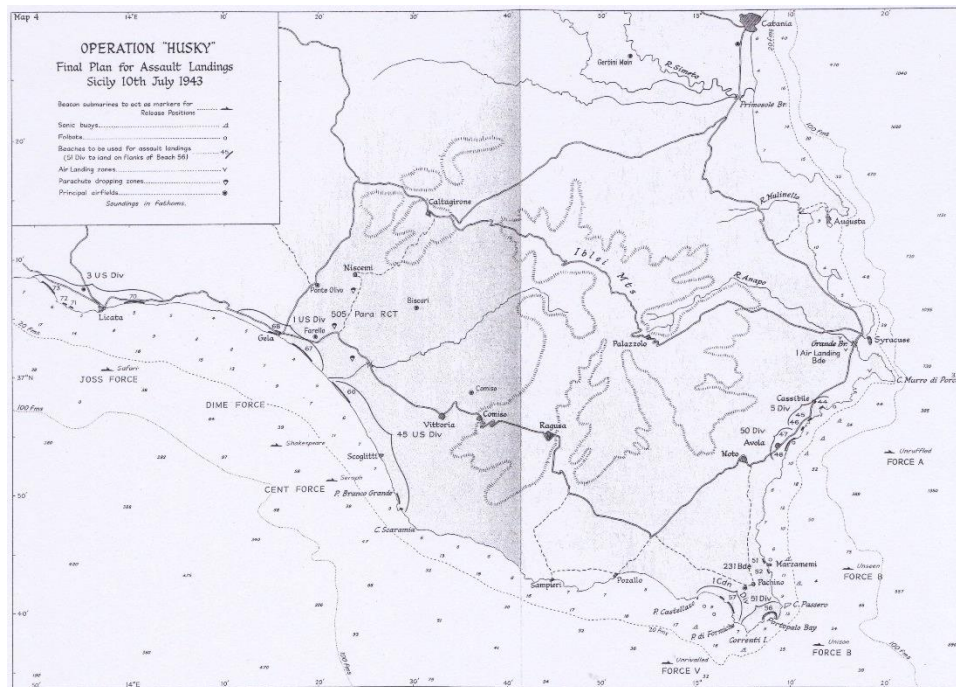


Figure 2. Operation Husky Final Plan for Assault Landings, 10 July 1943.

Source: Data from C.J.C. Molony et al., *The Mediterranean and Middle East*, vol. 5 (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1973), 25.

Force 141 limited the tasks assigned to each task force to the capture of key ports and airfields along the south and southwest coast of Sicily. Force 545, Montgomery's 8th Army, would capture the port of Syracuse and the airfield at Pachino, establish itself along the general

³⁵Montgomery, *Eighth Army*, 63.

line of Syracuse - Palazzolo - Ragusa, gain contact with Force 343, and then move to capture the port of Augusta, the port of Catania, and the Gerbini airfields. Force 343, Patton's 7th Army, would capture the port at Licata and the airfields located at Ponte Olivo, Biscari, and Comiso. Force 343 would then establish itself to gain contact with Force 545 to protect the assigned British controlled airfields and secure the British left flank. The planning instruction goes on to state that further operations were intended to establish Force 141 across the southeast corner of Sicily from Catania to Licata with a view to final operations for reduction of the island.³⁶

The original plan for the invasion used the flexibility provided by naval power to a far greater extent than the final version's frontal assault in the southeastern portion of Sicily. The original plan envisioned successive and widely dispersed amphibious landings from Catania to Palermo. The plan took advantage of naval mobility to put troops ashore on the flank and rear of the Axis defenders and would have forced the enemy to disperse his defensive strength. The final plan was a compromise heavily favoring Montgomery's desire for concentration. It sacrificed creativity, daring, and initiative.³⁷ Despite this major revision to the plan, from a dual-pronged assault to a single axis, the essence of the JPS outline plan remained intact. The two armies were to secure ports and airfields to support ground operations for further reduction of the island. In order to control the island, the two armies would fight across the north-south axis to Messina. The Allies lost a great deal of flexibility by accepting the single axis of advance and enabled the enemy to concentrate on one army at a time. Again, the inattention of senior leaders and the lack of an experienced staff prevented a creative solution to cut off the defenders and quickly secure the enemy line of communication at Messina. By accepting the JPS outline plan and implicitly

³⁶United States, *Report of Operations of the United States Seventh Army in the Sicilian Campaign, 10 July-17 August 1943* (s.l.: Seventh Army, 1943), 16.

³⁷Baldwin, *Battles Lost and Won*, 229.

refraining from an attack on the toe of the Italian mainland, the Force 141 planners drastically reduced the possibility of a decisive victory.

The Role of the Commander in Planning

A review of historical doctrine reveals that the importance of the role played by the commander in planning was apparent in 1943. FM 101-5, *Staff Officers' Field Manual: The Staff and Combat Orders*, states, "The extent to which each of the above steps (in the preparation of combat orders) (exclusive of the decision) will be performed personally by the commander is dependent upon a number of factors. Some of these are the size of the command, the situation, and the character and training of the commander and the members of his staff."³⁸ FM 101-5 goes on to state, "The more highly trained the members of the staff and the more conversant they become with the commander's policies and characteristics, the more the commander can rely upon them for the planning of details."³⁹ However, the field manual emphasizes that "the responsibility for the decision; plan, orders, and supervision rests solely upon the commander."⁴⁰ Both Eisenhower, as the Supreme Commander, and Alexander, as the Deputy Supreme Commander, should have been concerned with ensuring that the strategic objectives emanating from the CCS were translated into executable tactical actions. However, the inattention of both men during the early phases of planning resulted in the staff becoming absorbed with the large logistical requirements associated with moving two armies to the island, the synchronization of the assault, and the establishment of a foothold on the island. The planners had little time to

³⁸War Department, Field Manual 101-5, *Staff Officers' Field Manual: The Staff and Combat Orders* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 19 August 1940), 36.

³⁹*Ibid.*, 37.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*

consider the next phase of operations which was reduction of the island, and possibly the isolation, and destruction of the enemy force.

Modern doctrine deems the commander the central figure in operational design.⁴¹ The commander is the central figure because he not only has the education and experience but also because his judgment and decisions are required to guide the staff through the planning process. Alexander should have been the one guiding the staff through the planning. However, he was busy with 18th Army Group in Tunisia and exercising operational control of 1st Army. In a telegraph to Field Marshall Alan Brooke, British Chief of the Imperial Staff and chairman of the British Chiefs of Staff, Montgomery highlighted the problem stating, “There does not seem to be any senior commander who is handling HUSKY. I can’t get anyone to give decisions on big matters....If you want to have a successful overseas expedition, you must take the commander of it and let him do that and nothing else.”⁴²

AFHQ AND JOINT COORDINATION

The command structure for Operation Husky frustrated Eisenhower and ultimately proved to be inefficient. The divergent command styles of the Allies highlight the main problem presented by the command structure for the operation. The British preferred command by committee. The Americans preferred a centralized command. Eisenhower felt that the British knowingly foisted their committee system into his AFHQ, thereby undermining his authority.⁴³ Eisenhower would have preferred a continuation of centralized command under his sole direction, which he viewed as effective during the early stages of operations in North Africa. Though Eisenhower was determined to protect the command structure, his chief of staff, General Walter

⁴¹JP 5-0 *Joint Operation Planning*, III-2.

⁴²Nigel Hamilton, *Master of the Battlefield: Monty's War Years, 1942-1944*, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1983), 249.

⁴³Garland and Smyth, *Sicily and the Surrender of Italy*, 11.

B. Smith insisted he accept the Combined Chiefs' directive.⁴⁴ Thus, Eisenhower found himself in the position of supreme commander, predominantly occupied with theater strategic issues, with the actual operations conducted by a committee of commanders over which he presided.⁴⁵ The result of this command by committee system was the failure to coordinate joint operations to prevent the evacuation of Axis forces through the straits of Messina during the execution of Operation Husky.

Three weeks into the operation, Axis plans to evacuate the island became evident. On 31 July 1943, Montgomery's 8th Army removed documents from a German officer that contained maps and orders detailing the enemy defensive plan and plans for withdrawal.⁴⁶ Montgomery relayed this information to Alexander. Alexander then sent a message on 03 August 1943 to Tedder and Cunningham stating:

Indications suggest that Germans are making preparations for withdrawal to the mainland when this becomes necessary. It is quite possible he may start pulling out before front collapses. We must be in a position to take immediate advantage of such a situation by using full weight of Naval and Air power. You have no doubt co-ordinated plans to meet this contingency and I for my part will watch situation most carefully so as to let you know the right moment to strike and this may well come upon us sooner than we expect.⁴⁷

As the message indicates, Alexander clearly expected the air force and navy to plan to interdict an Axis withdrawal. However, no such plan was forthcoming. During execution, the component commanders found it difficult to decide on joint operations quickly. The responsible commanders occupied widely dispersed headquarters. Eisenhower, the Supreme Commander, was in Algiers. Alexander, the commander of land forces, was in Sicily. Cunningham, commander of naval forces, was in Malta. Tedder, the commander of air forces, was in Tunis.⁴⁸ Their primary means

⁴⁴Garland and Smyth, *Sicily and the Surrender of Italy*, 11.

⁴⁵Merle Miller, *Ike the Soldier: As They Knew Him* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1987), 463.

⁴⁶D'Este, *Bitter Victory*, 527.

⁴⁷Hamilton, *Master of the Battlefield*, 347.

⁴⁸Bernard Law Montgomery, *The Memoirs of Field-Marshal the Viscount Montgomery of*

of communication was via telegram. As a result, the separate component commanders attacked the problem individually and with little effect.

The Allied air force conducted 2,514 sorties over the Messina Strait between 29 July 1943 and 17 August 1943.⁴⁹ These sorties accounted for a mere 25% of the 9,889 bomber and fighter bomber sorties that the Allies executed during Operation Husky.⁵⁰ Not only did the Allies use a fraction of the available air power, but they also failed to select the correct targets and utilize their strategic bombing capability. The Allied air force focused on the ports and port facilities of Messina, Reggio, and San Giovanni. However, none of these ports was part of the Axis evacuation.⁵¹ As a result, the Axis evacuation suffered minimal shipping losses, amounting to five damaged and 16 destroyed barges and ferry vessels.⁵²

Military historian, Carlo D'Este, best describes Allied naval efforts during the evacuation. "If the Allied air forces proved no more than a nuisance, the navy was even less of a factor."⁵³ According to American naval historian Samuel Eliot Morison, "Admiral Cunningham gave the matter very careful thought, but decided that there was no effective method of stopping the enemy, either by sea or air."⁵⁴ Other than small craft, such as Medium Torpedo Boats (MTB) and Medium Gun Boats (MGB), no other Allied craft ventured into the strait. Enemy use of searchlights and shore batteries reduced the effectiveness of these small craft. The only time that

Alamein, K.G. (Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1958), 169.

⁴⁹D'Este, *Bitter Victory*, 535.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*

⁵¹*Ibid.*, 544.

⁵²*Ibid.*, 538.

⁵³*Ibid.*, 539.

⁵⁴Samuel Eliot Morison, *Sicily – Salerno – Anzio: January 1943 – June 1944* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1957), 213.

these light naval patrols had an effect on the evacuation was 11 August 1943 when three British MTBs engaged six small craft and destroyed one Italian motor raft.⁵⁵

If the component commanders had been able to develop an integrated naval and air course of action; meaning one which utilized strategic bombing to cripple the ports, tactical bombing to neutralize coastal batteries, and warships to seize control of the strait, then the Allies might have stopped or at least greatly reduced the size of the Axis evacuation.⁵⁶ However, owing to the nature of the physical separation of the component headquarters, coordinated and integrated planning during execution was impossible. Foreshadowing this disconnect, in mid-June, the British Chiefs of Staff sent a message to Eisenhower to highlight their consternation. The message stated, “We cannot disguise our concern that owing to difficulties over communication, Cunningham, Tedder, and Alexander will not share same HQ for HUSKY operation. In our view separation of HQs of one commander from that of other two violates one of the most important principles of Combined Operations.”⁵⁷

Unity of Command

In 1943, there was no multi-national doctrine to guide establishment of the Allied command structures. FM 100-5 addresses unity of command by stating, “Unity of command obtains that *unity of effort* which is essential to the decisive application of full combat power of the available forces. Unity of effort is furthered by full *cooperation* between elements of the command.”⁵⁸ Despite Eisenhower’s efforts to establish unity of command for the operation, he served as a de facto chairman of the board. He only interjected his influence when the board

⁵⁵Morison, *Sicily – Salerno – Anzio*, 213.

⁵⁶D’Este, *Bitter Victory*, 544.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 545.

⁵⁸War Department, Field Manual 100-5, *Operations*, (1941; repr., Fort Leavenworth, KS: US Army Command and General Staff College Press, 1992), 22.

members presented to him problems for his resolution or issues for his decision in the face of disagreement. During operations, owing to dispersed headquarters and command by committee, it was difficult to get quick decisions. Montgomery states in his *Memoirs*, “When things went wrong, all they could do was to send telegrams to each other; it took time to gather them together for the purpose of making joint decisions.”⁵⁹ The resulting time lag and lack of coordination between the component commanders allowed the components to operate independently and resulted in a disjointed and half-hearted attempt to halt the Axis evacuation.

Current doctrine is more mature with respect to multinational operations. The Department of Defense devotes an entire manual to this subject. JP 3-16 *Multinational Operations* provides an overview of multinational command structures by stating:

No single command structure meets the needs of every multinational command, but there is one absolute: political considerations will heavily influence the ultimate shape of the command structure. However, participating nations should strive to achieve unity of command for the operation to the maximum extent possible, with missions, tasks, responsibilities, and authorities clearly defined and understood by all participants.⁶⁰

The publication also identifies six tenets for obtaining mutual confidence during multinational operations: respect, rapport, knowledge of partners, patience, mission focus, trust and confidence.⁶¹ These tenets may not guarantee success, but ignoring them may prevent achieving unity of effort which may lead to mission failure. Specifically addressing mission focus, JP 3-16 states, “When dealing with other nations, US forces should temper the need for respect, rapport, knowledge, and patience with the requirement to ensure that the necessary tasks are accomplished by those with the capabilities and authorities to accomplish those tasks.”⁶² If Eisenhower had acted within a command structure that allowed him the authority he possessed in the early phases

⁵⁹Montgomery, *Memoirs*, 169.

⁶⁰Joint Publication 3-16, *Multinational Operations*, (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, 16 July 2013), II-4.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, I-3 – I-4.

⁶²*Ibid.*

of Operation Torch as well as later as the Supreme Allied Commander for Operation Overlord, he may have been able to coordinate a sufficient joint response to the Axis evacuation. As it stood, there was too much discussion and too little action. While the component commanders struggled to find unity of effort, the land component faced its own difficulties.

ALEXANDER AND HIS OPERATIONAL APPROACH

Author and historian, Rick Atkinson, states in *The Day of Battle*, “The final HUSKY plan petered out twenty miles past the landing beaches.”⁶³ The focus for planning Operation Husky was on the amphibious assault. The plan lacked an operational approach beyond the initial objectives. Alexander set the following phases of the operation:

1. Preparatory. Naval and air operations to neutralize enemy activities at sea, and to gain air supremacy.
2. Seaborne and airborne assaults to capture certain airfields and the ports of Syracuse and Licata.
3. To establish a firm base from which to conduct operations to capture the ports of Augusta and Catania, and the group of airfields at Gerbini.
4. The capture of these ports and airfields.
5. The reduction of the island.⁶⁴

In retrospect, the fifth phase elicits the most interest. Alexander adequately described and assigned specific tasks to both of his task forces for the first four phases. However, the fifth phase was open-ended. The fifth phase does not constitute a specific operational approach. Without an overall concept of how the campaign will unfold, it is impossible to develop branches and sequels

⁶³Rick Atkinson, *The Day of Battle: The War in Sicily and Italy, 1943-1944* (New York: Henry Hold and Company; 2007), 55.

⁶⁴C.J.C. Molony et al., *The Mediterranean and Middle East*, vol. 5 (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1973), 28-29.

to operations. Without appropriate branches and sequels, the land component lacks the ability to respond and adapt to the realities on the ground.

Alexander is responsible for leaving the fifth phase of operations vague. Alexander, stated in interviews with United States military historians in 1949, that “he had not developed plans or possessed any firm convictions about the exploitation phase and how it ought to be conducted.”⁶⁵ Rather, he would determine Allied moves based on how the enemy reacted. As one of Montgomery’s senior staff officers wrote, “The two armies were left largely to develop their operations in the manner which seemed most propitious in the prevailing circumstances. When there is a master plan, the subordinates exercise their initiatives within its framework, and there is thus greater cohesion in seeking to achieve the superior commander’s object.”⁶⁶ Similarly, from the American perspective, Bradley stated, “Astonishing as it seems in retrospect, there was no master plan for the conquest of Sicily.”⁶⁷ Bradley goes on to stress that both he and Patton assumed that the post-landing strategy would be for 8th Army to advance up the east coast through Catania to Messina, thus, blocking the enemy withdrawal route. Simultaneously, 7th Army was to advance north through Enna and Nicosia to the north coast road and turn east to Messina. The combined operations of the two armies would serve to encircle and entrap the Axis defenders. However, Bradley reiterated that this was merely an assumption derived from the specific tasks assigned and the arrayal of the two armies.⁶⁸

⁶⁵D’Este, *Bitter Victory*, 322.

⁶⁶David Belchem, *All in the Day’s March* (London: Collins, 1978), 167.

⁶⁷Bradley, *A General’s Life*, 186.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 187.

Anticipation

FM 100-15 does not use the modern terms: anticipation, branches, and sequels. However, the manual does address the meaning of these terms as they relate to the campaign plan and to the commander's visualization of the plan. The manual describes the importance of building options within the plan beyond the concentration of forces for employment in a decisive direction. Plans that survive beyond the first encounter with the enemy must consider probable successive operations to continue the success achieved initially, as well as provide for actions to be taken should the results be other than those hoped for or expected.⁶⁹ FM 100-15 also describes the planning of subsequent or alternative options in relation to time and separate command echelons. Tactical level commanders may plan from day to day, or hour to hour. Commanders at the army level and above must project themselves days and weeks into the future. This increased time horizon at army is due to the preparation and time required to move large forces. Thus, the need to expect deviations and retain operational agility is more critical at the operational level than at the tactical level.

Decisions at the operational level have far reaching consequences. The initial force disposition both affects the planning of branches and sequels. The arrayal of forces illuminates options available to the commander to direct actions to reach the desired end state. The CCS and Force 141 outline plans both accepted a limited approach to attain the ultimate goal of seizing Messina. The Force 141 plan further constrained the force's options by concentrating the invasion in south and southeast Sicily. However, had the Force 141 planners applied sufficient rigor to developing options for the approach from the beaches to the ultimate objective they may have had the ability to take advantage of opportunities for action as they arose. After initial success upon landing, the 8th Army was unable to penetrate the Axis defense arrayed along the Allied approach

⁶⁹FM 100-15 *Field Regulations for Larger Units*, 9.

in the east. The 7th Army positioned on the 8th Army's western flank would be able to quickly bypass the defenses and cut off the bulk of German forces repositioning from the western end of the island.⁷⁰ Instead of changing the main effort, Alexander approved a boundary change giving a critical road to the 8th Army.⁷¹ The confusion and time spent in transition, as 7th Army units moved back to the south over hard fought ground, allowed the Germans to reposition and successfully block the 8th Army's attempt to advance. Meanwhile, left with no other options, 7th Army advanced on Palermo at the extreme western end of Sicily.⁷² Instead of relieving pressure on the 8th Army, this maneuver to Palermo and the subsequent advance from Palermo to Messina served to push the Germans back towards Messina. The time lost in shifting the boundary in 8th Army's favor and maneuvering 7th Army to the west coast allowed the defenders to establish successive defensive lines from which to buy time for an effective withdrawal in defensible terrain. This missed opportunity stems from the lack of a defined operational approach beyond the initial objectives.

In his memoirs, Montgomery notes that prior to the campaign the planners concentrated on the landings. In his opinion, no one was considering how the campaign should develop once ashore to secure the island and prevent the escape of Axis forces back to Italy.⁷³ Montgomery proposed a scheme of maneuver which portrayed the 7th and 8th Armies landing side by side on the south coast then advancing quickly to cut the island in half. This line of operation would serve to set up a defensive flank oriented to the west to prevent repositioning Axis forces from affecting the decisive operation. Montgomery envisioned the decisive operation as composed of a concentration of both armies rapidly advancing to Messina to prevent an Axis escape in

⁷⁰D'Este, *Bitter Victory*, 328.

⁷¹Molony, *The Mediterranean and Middle East*, 88.

⁷²*Ibid.*, 111.

⁷³Montgomery, *Memoirs*, 164.

coordination with naval and air forces to disrupt operations within the strait. Although Alexander agreed with this concept, he did not conduct the operation in this manner. Alexander's reliance on the 8th Army as the main effort for the decisive operation in the face of changing conditions on the ground resulted in an uncoordinated shift in the scheme of maneuver that ultimately prevented exploiting an opportunity to affect the enemy withdrawal.

Current doctrine describes anticipation as key to effective planning. Commanders must consider what might happen as a result of their action and identify indicators that may bring the possible event to pass. They continually gather information during operations and remain alert for the unexpected and for opportunities to exploit. Commanders also identify probable enemy reactions through continuous and thorough wargaming. During execution, commanders gain and maintain the initiative thereby forcing the enemy to react rather than initiate. Anticipation and identification of the indicators of possible events reduces the effects of surprise on the friendly force and optimizes friendly actions in relation to the enemy.⁷⁴

Effective planning includes the development of branches and sequels to account for unforeseen actions and events. Branches provide a range of options built into the plan and add flexibility by anticipating situations that could alter the plan.⁷⁵ Branches deal with the question: What if? Sequels anticipate subsequent operations based on the possible outcomes (victory, defeat, or stalemate) of the current operation.⁷⁶ Sequels answer the question: What is next? Immediately after the war, Eisenhower described planning and anticipation as follows:

A battle plan normally attempts to provide guidance even into [the area of expectation], so that no opportunity for extensive exploitation may be lost...concerning the intent of the commander. These phases of a plan do not comprise rigid instructions.... A sound battle plan provides flexibility in both space and time to meet the constantly changing

⁷⁴JP 5-0 *Joint Operation Planning*, III-33.

⁷⁵Ibid., III-36.

⁷⁶Ibid., III-37.

factors of the battle problem in such a way as to achieve the final goal of the commander. Rigidity inevitably defeats itself...⁷⁷

During Operation Husky, flexibility was absent because the plan contained no branches. Both during the course of battle and during planning, Alexander seemed to display a lack of interest.⁷⁸ This lack of interest on the senior land component commander's part most likely contributed to the absence of branch planning prior to the operation and the inability to develop branches during operations. Nevertheless, GEN Eisenhower's statement and FM 100-15 show that the commanders and planners knew that flexibility was needed in the plan. The value of planning branch lies in their development of the branch plans prior to high tempo operations. As operations begin, there is insufficient time available to plan, prepare, and execute branches. Thus, it is critical to preserve freedom of action through rigorous preparation of branches during planning.

A lack of foresight also hindered the Allies' ability to develop sequels for Operation Husky. The lack of a coherent and coordinated Allied strategy for post-Husky operations complicated planning for sequels. At the Casablanca Conference, the Allies never resolved whether Operation Husky was an intermediate objective as part of a larger campaign in the Mediterranean or just an end of itself to use forces readily available after the conclusion of Operation Torch.⁷⁹ At a minimum, planners develop sequels in the case of anticipated success, failure, or stalemate.

The failure to anticipate before and during Operation Husky contributed to the Allies loss of initiative. Despite overwhelming disadvantages, the Axis forces were able to set the conditions for an effective evacuation from the island. Branches and sequels add depth to operations. In the

⁷⁷Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe* (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1948), 256.

⁷⁸Mark Perry, *Partners in Command: George Marshall and Dwight Eisenhower in War and Peace* (New York: Penguin Books, 2007), 204.

⁷⁹D'Este, *Bitter Victory*, 552.

case of Operation Husky, the lack of branches and sequels confined operations to the tactical depth immediately in front of the 7th and 8th Armies. The Allies failed to take advantage of space, time, and capabilities to extend their depth and create opportunities by planning for anticipated success, failure, or stalemate.

MESSINA AS THE CENTER OF GRAVITY

The operational design prescribed by the CCS and JPS limited Force 141 in their development of an operational approach for the campaign. This resulted in selection of a Center of Gravity (COG) which they could not directly affect. Force 141 did not focus their plan on the destruction of the Axis forces in Sicily. Planners did not identify enemy operational COGs and they did not devise strategies to attack enemy critical vulnerabilities. The Allies should have selected a course of action that oriented on the enemy, cut him off, and defeated his operational reserve. Instead, the planners chose the Port of Messina as the operational objective, even though they could not directly attack it. The Allies believed that the capture of Messina would unhinge the Axis defense. Thus, Messina became the Allied main objective and the de facto enemy COG. Due in large part to its close proximity to the Italian mainland, the Port of Messina was a critical strength of the Axis forces. If the Allies had captured the port, they could have sealed off the defenders and denied them reinforcement or resupply through the adjacent Straits of Messina.⁸⁰ In selecting Messina as both the overall operational objective and the enemy COG, the Allied main effort, the 8th Army, would be the key to its attainment. However, due to the severely restrictive terrain and effective enemy actions, 8th Army quickly lost tempo in its thrust up the coast at Catania.

Development of the plan beyond initial objectives may have allowed Alexander and Force 141 planners to anticipate enemy actions in relation to the terrain and friendly operations.

⁸⁰Garland and Smyth, *Sicily and the Surrender of Italy*, 53.

This anticipation would have led to the development of branches to overcome stalemate and cut off the defending forces. If operations of the two armies were coordinated and phased appropriately, the Allies would have been better able to maintain the initiative and achieve the decisive end of destroying the Axis on the island. The common theme which should emerge from the objective, center of gravity, and anticipation is the conceptualization of what will occur next. In order to attain the ultimate goal, planners should envision more than the intermediate objectives along their line of operations. They must link these objectives to an overall operational approach that optimizes friendly capabilities with respect to time, space, and purpose to overcome the enemy and gain a position of relative advantage. From this position of advantage, the friendly force is then poised for future operations to maintain momentum and build upon success. If the friendly force faces adversity such as failure or stalemate, planners must build options into the plan by anticipating coordinated actions to attain and retain the initiative. Thorough and rigorous planning and wargaming link the selection of attainable objectives, feasible and valid centers of gravity, and the anticipation of enemy actions. The resulting operational approach results in shared understanding at the subordinate levels of command to synchronize operations to achieve the ultimate objective.

Center of Gravity

FM 100-15 does not formally recognize the term center of gravity. However, in defining the term objective, the manual discusses many of the elements that have come to be associated with the center of gravity. JP 5-0 *Joint Operation Planning* defines the center of gravity as “the hub of all power and movement, on which everything depends . . . the point at which all our energies should be directed.”⁸¹ In defining the considerations for selecting objectives, FM 100-15 emphasizes the location of vital essentials of a nation’s existence. The manual also states that it

⁸¹JP 5-0 *Joint Operation Planning*, III-22.

may not be necessary for armies or groups of armies to move directly against the enemy's main force. It may be more advantageous to advance toward some point containing the essentials of national life and force the enemy to defend this point or abandon it.⁸² Thus, in this context, FM 100-15's discussion of objective is essentially a discussion of what is now called the center of gravity.

The selection of Messina as the operational objective and as the Axis operational center of gravity is appropriate in relation to historical doctrine. The Allies viewed Messina as the key to the Axis defense. If seized, the Allies would trap the Axis forces on the island and deny the enemy the ability to reinforce or resupply from mainland Italy. However, the port defenses were too strong for a seaborne attack and the port was out of range of Allied fighter support. It was not feasible to attack Messina directly early in the invasion. Instead, the Allies focused on a scheme of maneuver once ashore in the south to seize a series of ports and airfields as initial objectives from which to launch further actions. This scheme of maneuver is also in line with the 1942 doctrine. FM 100-15 states "unless the commander already possesses sufficient air superiority to permit other operations, the initial objective must include the attainment of air superiority. This may also require operations to acquire bases from which effective air operations can be conducted."⁸³ Although choosing Messina as the operational objective and focusing on establishing air superiority are both consistent with 1942 doctrine, it appears that designating the enemy forces as the operational objective or center of gravity would have been better. Rather than focusing on the reduction of the island and the seizure of Messina, the Allies might have been more effective had they focused on destruction of the enemy armed forces. Critics of the

⁸²FM 100-15 *Field Regulations for Larger Units*, 13.

⁸³Ibid., 12.

operation have stated that landings closer to Messina, possibly including the toe of Italy would have effectively cut off the Axis defenders and achieved a decisive victory.

Current doctrine emphasizes the importance of identifying and analyzing friendly and adversary COGs. JP 5-0 defines a COG as “a source of power that provides moral or physical strength, freedom of action, or will to act.”⁸⁴ Just as there are different objectives at different levels of war, there may be different COGs for different levels. The important aspect is that an objective is always linked to a COG. JP 5-0 goes on to define examples of COGs at the strategic and operational levels. At the strategic level, a COG could be a military force, an alliance, political or military leaders, a set of critical capabilities or functions, or national will. At the operational level, a COG is most often associated with the enemy’s military capabilities, but could include other capabilities in the operational environment. Traditional warfare focuses on defeating the enemy’s armed forces, destroying his war-making capacity, or seizing or retaining territory to force a change in an enemy’s government or policies. Understanding the relationship among COGs in the context of the operational environment both permits and compels precise thinking and a clear expression in operational design.

Planners analyze COGs using a framework built on three critical factors intended to aid in identifying the relationships among COGs. These factors are critical capabilities, critical requirements, and critical vulnerabilities. Critical capabilities are the attributes that the COG possesses which allow it to accomplish its objective. Critical capabilities also allow the COG to prevent the adversary from attaining the adversary’s objective.⁸⁵ The ability to destroy, seize, or

⁸⁴JP 5-0 *Joint Operation Planning*, III-22.

⁸⁵Dr. Joe Strange and Colonel Richard Iron, “Understanding Centers of Gravity and Critical Vulnerabilities, Part 2: The CG-CC-CR-CV Construct: A Useful Tool to Understand and Analyze the Relationship between Centers of Gravity and their Critical Vulnerabilities,” <https://www.mcu.usmc.mil/csc/Documents/Strange%20and%20Iron%20--%20Understanding%20Centers%20of%20Gravity%20and%20Critical%20Vulnerabilities.pdf> (accessed 19 January 2014), 7.

prevent the friendly force from achieving its mission are critical capabilities. In the case of Husky, the defending forces' ability to prevent friendly amphibious landings, to deny a friendly foothold on the island, to mount counterattacks against friendly forces that advance beyond the beaches, or to prevent reduction of the island are all critical capabilities. Critical requirements are the conditions, resources, and means that enable a critical capability. Critical requirements are the conditions essential for a COG to use its critical capabilities.⁸⁶ Examples of critical requirements are cohesion, morale, good weather, precise intelligence, resupply, routes, and bridges. In Sicily, the enemy required resupply and reinforcements. The line of communication through the straits of Messina was required to permit resupply and reinforcement. Destruction, defeat, or neutralization of critical vulnerabilities contributes to the effective destruction, defeat, or neutralization of the COG by preventing its use of its critical capabilities.⁸⁷ Examples of critical vulnerabilities are a single resupply route, integral defensive measures, waning morale, and reliance on overly centralized command structures. In Sicily, the reliance on the straits of Messina as the primary line of communication presented Messina as both a critical requirement and critical vulnerability.

In their 1993 article, "Operational Logic: Selecting the Center of Gravity," Colonel William H. Mendel and Colonel Lamar Tooke provided a method for selecting the COG that links the COG to the strategic aims or objectives of a campaign. Mendel and Tooke based their method on two principles concerning the relationship between the COG and aims or objectives. First, COGs are derivative of the aims or objectives established at the level (strategic, operational, or tactical) for which one is planning. Second, the aims or objectives established at the operational and tactical levels should contribute to one's ability to impose his will over the COG

⁸⁶Strange and Iron, "Understanding Centers of Gravity and Critical Vulnerabilities, Part 2," 7.

⁸⁷Ibid., 8.

at the next higher level of war.⁸⁸ The application of this methodology requires submission of potential COGs to tests for validity and feasibility.

Given the guidance that the operational COG was the port of Messina, planners should have asked the following question to test its validity: “If I desire to impose my will upon this center of gravity, will that action create a cascading, deteriorating effect on morale, cohesion and will to fight that prevents my enemy from achieving his aims and allows the achievement of my own?”⁸⁹ In the case of Messina, the answer is clearly yes. First, Allied seizure of the port denies the Axis defenders their dual purpose line of communication. Second, interdicting the line of communication results in the entrapment of the Axis forces on the island. Entrapment would create a cascading deteriorating effect on morale, cohesion, and will to fight. Third, the Allies would prevent the enemy from achieving his aim of defending the island and preventing the Allies from gaining a lodgment from which to launch attacks against the Axis on continental Europe. Conversely, the Allies would achieve their own aims. Once the COG passed the validity test, planners would next submit the potential COG to a feasibility test.

For the feasibility test, the planner must ask: “If I have selected a valid center of gravity, do I have a feasible ability to impose my will over it?”⁹⁰ The selected COG, Messina, fails the feasibility test. As noted previously, JPS planners determined that a direct attack on Messina was not feasible early on in the operation because it was outside friendly fighter aircraft range and the enemy port defenses were formidable. Mendel and Tooke offer the following observation relevant to this case, “Lacking the ability to impose your will over a valid center of gravity requires an adjustment of the strategic aims and consideration of centers of gravity based on the

⁸⁸William H. Mendel and Lamar Tooke, “Operational Logic: Selecting the Center of Gravity,” *Military Review* LXXIII, no. 6 (June 1993): 5.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*

⁹⁰*Ibid.*

adjusted aims.”⁹¹ Following this adjustment, once again the planner submits the new potential COG to the validity and feasibility tests. Once the selected COG passes the validity and feasibility tests, the planner may develop an operational approach and courses of action that attain the ultimate objective.

CONCLUSION

Operation Husky achieved the limited objectives set forth at Casablanca. The Allies secured the Mediterranean lines of communication, caused the diversion of German strength from the Eastern Front, and applied pressure that ultimately caused Italy to drop out of the war. In spite of this success, historians continue to lament the Allies’ failure to destroy the Axis defenders on the island and achieve a decisive victory. The preceding analysis highlights five factors that contributed to this failure: (1) the strategic guidance was vague and did not provide a clear vision of the end state of the campaign, (2) operational level commanders did not attempt to correct the shortfalls in strategic guidance, (3) once ashore, the Allies were not able to either fix the enemy forces or isolate those forces from their route of withdrawal, (4) the senior land component commander did not formulate an operational approach, and (5) the planners selected the wrong center of gravity.

Operation Husky highlights the importance of a clearly defined operational approach and end state. The operational approach describes the actions necessary to achieve the end state, therefore, the end state is a key element in defining the approach. Commanders must effectively describe the operational approach and end state to all participants in order to attain unified effort to achieve a decisive victory. Lacking a clear operational approach and clear end state beyond the initial invasion objectives, the Allies failed to adopt a direct coordinated approach to trap the Axis defenders on the island. The Allied failure to answer the question of what next hampered each

⁹¹Mendel and Tooke, “Operational Logic,” 6.

version of the plan, from the original JPS outline plan to the final plan approved by Eisenhower on 03 May 1943. In the strategic context, the Allies were undecided as to what operations to pursue after Operation Husky. In the operational context, the army commanders were unsure about what was expected after the seizure of ports and airfields. The selection of Messina as the ultimate objective was consistent with the doctrine of the era. However, the inability of the Allies to mount effective offensive action by any military component severely restricted the probability of a decisive operational victory. Current doctrine stresses the importance of termination criteria and the military end state. These details provide definite parameters from which commanders and planners may develop operational approaches that optimize the use of time, space, and capabilities. While the initial strategic guidance was vague, operational level commanders might have corrected that shortfall during planning. However, operational level commanders did not attempt to correct the shortfalls in strategic guidance.

The combination of insufficient senior leader involvement in the planning process and a staff that was inexperienced with the type and scale of operations required for Operation Husky resulted in the lack of a creative solution to cut off the defenders and quickly secure the enemy lines of communication at Messina. Limited availability of the commander during the planning process is an obstacle faced during most planning efforts. An experienced and cohesive staff may be able to overcome this obstacle and present viable options to the commander. If not, it is imperative that the commander recognize that his absence may have a debilitating effect on the plan. The role of the commander in the early phases of planning is even more critical as the complexity of the problem increases.

Due to the physical separation of the component headquarters, a coordinated and integrated joint operation during execution was impossible. Joint and multinational operations are inherently complex and complicated. The state of communications in the modern era allows for a greater dispersion of headquarters. However, there is no substitute for face to face interaction in

planning, coordinating, and executing operations. During Operation Husky, the resulting time lag between receipt of communiques, analysis, and decision was too great to overcome the exigency for coordinated joint operations.

The conscious decision by Alexander to determine Allied actions based on how the enemy reacted left the 15th Army Group with little flexibility. JP 5-0 states, “Plans require adjustment beyond the initial states of the operation. Consequently, Joint Force Commanders build flexibility into their plans by developing branches and sequels to preserve freedom of action in rapidly changing conditions.”⁹² Branches are options built into the basic plan and sequels are subsequent operations based on the possible outcomes of the current operation – victory, defeat, or stalemate.⁹³ As Omar Bradley laments in his memoirs, “there was no master plan for the conquest of Sicily. Nothing had been worked out beyond the limited beachhead objectives.”⁹⁴ The failure to anticipate firm resistance along 8th Army’s avenue of approach to Messina resulted in confusion and anger as Alexander ordered the 7th Army to cede hard earned ground to the 8th Army while the enemy made the most of this gift of time to consolidate its defensive lines and posture for its resulting successful evacuation.

Though consistent with historical doctrine, the Allied identification of Messina as the enemy COG contributed to their failure to attain a decisive victory. The absence of a clear operational approach and the lack of anticipation on the part of senior operational leaders contributed to Messina’s selection as the COG. The Allies should have selected a course of action that oriented on the enemy, cut him off, and defeated his operational reserve. Instead, the result was a race to capture Messina. More thorough planning beyond the beaches could have revealed options that were more decisive. However, planners felt bound to the essence of the original JPS

⁹²JP 5-0 *Joint Operation Planning*, III-36.

⁹³Ibid., III-36 – III-37.

⁹⁴Bradley, *A General’s Life*, 186.

outline plan. The final plan did little to draw attention away from Messina to focus on the enemy defenders.

The lessons learned during Operation Husky paid dividends later in the war and have withstood the test of time. These lessons are as valuable today as they were in 1943. The essential lessons in planning and executing amphibious operations, in joint and combined organization, in planning, and command and control resulted in changes that proved successful in Operation Overlord. Furthermore, the maturity of modern joint and multinational doctrine owes a great deal of its evolution to the debates, compromise, and actions emanating from this early era of modern joint and multinational warfare.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alexander of Tunis, Harold Rupert Leofric George Alexander. *The Alexander Memoirs, 1940-1945*. New York: McGraw, Hill, 1962.
- Atkinson, Rick. *The Day of Battle: The War in Sicily and Italy, 1943-1944*. New York: Henry Hold and Company, 2007.
- Baldwin, Hanson. *Battle Lost and Won: Great Campaigns of World War II*. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, Incorporated, 1966.
- Belchem, David. *All in the Day's March*. London: Collins, 1978.
- Birtle, Andrew J. *Sicily*. Washington, DC: US Center for Military History, 1993. US Center for Military History. <http://www.history.army.mil/brochures/72-16/72-16.htm> (accessed 11 January 2014).
- Bradley, Omar N. *A General's Life*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982.
- D'Este, Carlo. *Bitter Victory: The Battle for Sicily, 1943*. American ed. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1988.
- Eisenhower, Dwight D. *Crusade in Europe*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1948.
- Fergusson, Bernard. *The Watery Maze: The Story of Combined Operations*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1961.
- Garland, Albert N. and Smyth, Edward M. *Sicily and the Surrender of Italy*. United States Army in World War II. The Mediterranean Theater of Operations. Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, US Army, 1965.
- Hamilton, Nigel. *Master of the Battlefield: Monty's War Years, 1942-1944*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1983.
- Joint History Office. "Casablanca Conference, January 1943: Papers and Minutes of Meetings. World War II Operational Documents." Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2003. Combined Arms Research Library Digital Library. <http://cgsc.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/p4013coll8/id/3688/rec/4> (accessed November 25, 2013).
- Joint Publication 5-0, *Joint Operation Planning*. Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, 11 August 2011.
- Joint Publication 3-16, *Multinational Operations*. Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, 16 July 2013.
- Matloff, Maurice. *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare 1943-1944*. Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1959.
- Mendel, William H., and Tooke, Lamar. "Operational Logic: Selecting the Center of Gravity" *Military Review* 73, no. 6 (June 1993): 2-11.

- Miller, Merle. *Ike the Soldier: As They Knew Him*, New York: G.P. Putnam Sons, 1987.
- Molony, C.J.C. et al. *The Mediterranean and Middle East*, vol. 5. London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1973.
- Montgomery, Bernard L. *Eighth Army: El Alamein to the River Sangro*. Germany: Printing and Stationary Services, British Army of the Rhine, 1946.
- Montgomery, Bernard L. *The Memoirs of Field-Marshal the Viscount Montgomery of Alamein*, K.G. Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1958.
- Morrison, Samuel Eliot. *Sicily-Salerno-Anzio: January 1943 – June 1944*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1957.
- Perry, Mark. *Partners in Command: George Marshall and Dwight Eisenhower in War and Peace*. New York: Penguin Books, 2007.
- Staff, United States 7th Army. *Report of Operations of the United States Seventh Army in the Sicilian Campaign, 10 July-17 August 1943*. s.l.: Seventh Army, 1943. Combined Arms Research Library Digital Library. <http://cgsc.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/ref/collection/p4013coll8/id/3295> (accessed November 25, 2013).
- Strange, Dr. Joe, and Colonel Richard Iron, "Understanding Centers of Gravity and Critical Vulnerabilities, Part 2: The CG-CC-CR-CV Construct: A Useful Tool to Understand and Analyze the Relationship between Centers of Gravity and their Critical Vulnerabilities." <https://www.mcu.usmc.mil/csc/Documents/Strange%20and%20Iron%20--%20Understanding%20Centers%20of%20Gravity%20and%20Critical%20Vulnerabilities.pdf> (accessed 19 January 2013).
- War Department. Field Manual 100-5, *Operations*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1941.
- . Field Manual 100-15, *Field Regulations for Larger Units*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1942.
- . Field Manual 101-5, *Staff Officers' Field Manual: The Staff and Combat Orders*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1940.
- Wilt, Alan F. *War From the Top: German and British Military Decision Making During World War II*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990.